3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

294 hide and boiled them down in water until the concoction made a glue-like sizing. It was spread over the surface to be decorated and [386] served as a fixer for the paint. The paints, which were mineral pigments in water, were pressed into the hide with the edge of a patella. After the design was completed, the hide was sized once again. Such [428] robes, although they could be buried with the owner at her funeral, were usually inherited by a younger sister.[25]

291 293 Both men and women normally went bareheaded, except in bad weather when the robe was pulled up to form a kind of temporary hood, but in later years many Comanches wore fur caps made of buffalo calf or coyote skins. Warriors sometimes wore a coiffure of buffalo horns or a hood made of the scalp of the buffalo with the horns attached in proper position as a part of their ceremonial attire. For special state or ceremonial occasions, feathers were worn as plumes or woven into a hood or war bonnet. The Indians of the East wore a narrow head band into which feathers were stuck upright, but the Comanches and other Plains Indians wore a kind of cap around which the feathers were placed so as to droop and spread backward, and not infrequently the cap supported a streamer.

293 Clark Wissler believes the war bonnet was not regularly worn prior to the reservation period by the Plains Indians, although by 1834 feathers were worn on the head as a badge of distinguished service throughout a wide area of the Plains.[26] His conclusion regarding the use of feathers by Plains Indians in general is fairly well substantiated by evidence regarding the Comanches. Had the war bonnet been worn, some of the early visitors would certainly have noted it. It was too conspicuous to have been overlooked. David G. Burnet mentioned the buffalo-horn headdress but not the war bonnet. Several accounts relate that feathers, particularly those of the eagle, were worn in the hair by warriors. Captain R. G. Carter, who was with Colonel MacKenzie in the campaigns against the Comanches in the eighteen seventies, was one of the first to mention feathered war bonnets of the "most unique and fantastical designs" as though they were regular and proper dress on special occasions.[27] They certainly never became

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Clark Wissler, *The Relations of Nature to Man in Aboriginal America*, 52–61.

[27] Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 283.

Food, Clothing, and Dwellings

nearly so important to the Comanches as they were to some tribes farther north.

The life of a Comanche warrior was rugged, but that did not keep him from spending a great deal of time at his toilet. He was especially proud of his hair, and in the village he might be seen daily combing, greasing, and braiding it. Men parted their hair from the center of the forehead back to the crown, forming a braid on each side, and made a streak of yellow, white, or red along the part. The braids were tied or wrapped with beaver fur or any other available material that appealed to the wearer's fancy. Beaver fur was worn on dress occasions. Bright-colored pieces of cloth, with red the most commonly recurring color, is used at the present time by the older men. Pieces of silver, beads, tin, glass, and single feathers were attached to the side locks as decorations. Each man also wore a scalp lock braided from the hair at the top of his head, and in it he usually wore a single yellow or black feather. Brushes, made from the tails of porcupines, were used for grooming the hair. The most common form was made by stretching the porcupine tail over a stick of wood. Hair brushes were also made by pounding out the fibres of a large yucca stalk. These fibers were gathered up and bound together with a buckskin thong and singed so as to burn off the sharp edges. The men never shaved, but carefully plucked all hair from their face and eyebrows with a pair of tweezers made of bone, leaving the whole face as smooth as a baby's cheek. A piece of door spring was used incessantly by Post Oak Jim through all the long hours of interviews in 1933. Comanche vanity went so far that narcissistic bucks begged for the hair that women cut off in mourning so that they could splice it into their braids to make them look longer. She Invites Her Relatives tells of one *tuiβltsi* who was showing off at a dance. "He threw his side lock over his shoulder—and the attached end came off. Everybody hooted with laughter; he picked it up and went home."

Paint was an indispensable article of ornamentation for both sexes. Both men and women, when circumstances permitted, painted their faces before meeting strangers and for all special occasions. The Comanches always carried paint with them. Vermilion was much sought after, but when it could not be obtained from the white trader, paint was made from clays and from weed and berry juices. Black was the

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

fanning passes over the front and back of the body from the waist down. Sanapia prays that her patient may live a long, healthy life as she fans him and that all evil will be blown away from the patient by the motion of the feather. She explains that she has the power of the eagle; and when she touches a person with her Medicine feather, it is as if the eagle were touching them, instilling in them some of its Medicine. Her feather carries with it the tabus associated with her other medicine articles. However, a specific emphasis was placed by her mother on the prohibition of taking the Medicine feather into a room or area in which there is a large group of people.

> That eagle got some kind of power that I use for Medicine. I got one eagle feather, and it is really powerful, that thing. And I believe it. I done many works with that feather. I believe it.

Indian Lard

"Indian lard" is the name Sanapia applies to tallow or rendered beef fat. She uses it as a general purpose salve, though she states that it is especially efficacious in the treatment of severe burns. Also, it is her only remedy for constipation. Two or three tablespoonsful of lukewarm liquified tallow are administered to a patient with constipation.

Mouth Wash

The majority of cases which Sanapia treats involve the sucking operation. When the sucking is completed, Sanapia requires something to kill the "poison" and the disagreeable taste which is left in her mouth. Her mother used kerosene; however, Sanapia prefers a commercial brand of mouth wash and carries a small bottle of it in her medicine kit.

Red Paint

The red paint used by Sanapia is obtained by grinding and powdering a dark red clay which she finds west of Geary, Oklahoma. The paint is reconstituted by mixing it with water or tallow.

The paint is ever present in all of her blessing ceremonies. She also uses this paint at the termination of her treatment of ghost sickness. On the last day of treatment, she paints the patient's face, lower arms, and lower legs. The patient is instructed to wear the paint for two days before washing it off.

Sanapia states that painting is a prayer to the earth. The red paint is obtained from the earth and is the color of the earth. When she applies it to her patient she is asking the earth to care for him.

> The earth . . . talk to it like a mother. They call it that. Say "Watch this man, or woman, or child. They walking on you, same color as you, they you child. You can see that. Watch out for them during the long time they got to be on you."

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

DYEING, SPINNING AND WEAVING, BY THE CAMANCHES, NAVAJOES, AND OTHER INDIANS OF NEW MEXICO.[1]

By J. Henry Peters.

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Thomas Ewbank, Esq.,

Dear Sir: Fully appreciating the heartiness and zeal, with which you direct your researches into the various branches of inquiry and learning connected with your important bureau, I with great pleasure, but with diffidence, accede to your request, and give you such information with regard to the manufactures of wool and cotton, as I have acquired in my rambles among our western Indians; and more especially, among the Camanches, Navajoes, and Apaches of western Texas and southern New Mexico. I have not been further west than Paso del Norte, in Texas, nor further north than Sonora, in New Mexico, and the surrounding county.

It is known to every observing traveler in those parts of our country — now no longer remote — that the brilliancy and durability of the various shades of primitive colors, and the few semi-colors that those Indians dye their wool in, are probably not equalled by the learned and scientific chemists of Europe, and our own country — an important fact, that seems not to have excited the curiosity of our otherwise enquiring countrymen. Should I be able, through your instrumentality, to bring to the public notice, such facts as will lead to enquiry and investigation, I should consider myself as having contributed somewhat to our national advancement in one branch of the arts at least, and that one of the most important.

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The Camanche, Navajoe, and Apache Indians, present the curious spectacle of marauding bands of well mounted men; seemingly always committing predatory incursions upon their civilized neighbors, the Texans and Mexicans, apparently con-

[1] Reprinted from the *Report of the U. S. Commission of Patents*, for 1850, part 1.

[p. 352]
[pp 1- 351 not processed]

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

I derived, and minutes made at the time, will now only enable me to give you the modus operandi of extracting their dyes, without being able to give you the names of the ingredients. The specimens I had been enabled to collect have become dried up, and many have been lost by crumbling, and I was not enabled to procure seeds or other means of reproducing the plant, and am not sufficiently a botanist to give you a technical description of them. I can give you the facts only, but these are of sufficient importance to awaken curiosity, and lead to the investigations of secrets by those more intimately connected with the subject treated of, and I think of sufficient importance to have that enquiry efficiently made under governmental auspices.

The colors most admired by the Camanches and Navajoes are crimson, blue, purple and green; consequently these colors are the most common among them in all their shades; and though in their weavings they blend these with brown, yellow and other colors, with singular judgment and taste, yet it is the brilliancy of those that you most admire.

All their primitive colors are the products of the prairie and mountain flowers, and their semi-colors are composed of these and the inner bark and roots of but few other plants combined in such proportions as the hue intended to be produced. They have no mineral dyes that I am aware of. Many of these flowers are small, indeed most of them; and the plants of low size, and begin to bloom in February, March and April, and continue till summer. During the blooming, the flowers are gathered early in the morning, with the dew upon them, and dried of the dew under a shade. The leaves are carefully picked off, the stems and such as have their petals covered with pollen of another color —*e. g.*— such as are purple or scarlet with petals of yellow or white pollen, are carefully separated from it. Particular flowers only are selected: all flowers of purple color are not used to dye purple, and so of every other color, but such only as are known to make an indelible dye.

When the desired quantity of leaves are collected they are carefully and cleanly bruised and into them a small quantity of ley (I shall hereafter describe it) is put, but only enough to make

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6●

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a thick paste — which has the property of loosening the dye from the fabrics, and facilitating its extraction. A small bag shaped like a money purse, and but little larger, made of new dog skin, deer or wolf skin, tanned by the Indians in a manner peculiar to them, is used to compress the juice from the pulp. This bag, a foot or eighteen inches long and three or four inches wide, is half filled with the pulp. Two small handles of wood are stuck through the ends of the bag, about the length of a corkscrew handle, and used to grasp a firm hold, and as levers by which the bag is twisted until the juice is extracted through the pores of the skin, which are very open.

Whether extracted or not for immediate use, the dye is carefully bottled, in glass if it can be procured, or in small bladders, if glass is not to be had. I say small bladders, because if put away in large quantities, the dye sometimes spoils, they say, and produces dingy colors. When put away for future use the light is carefully excluded by overwrapping with skins, or any thing else, and generally buried in the ground under a shelter in which fire is not used, so as to exclude heat. The dyes, however, are generally used soon as extracted, as during the winter the women prepare their best wool, and have it ready in the spring and summer for the process of dying.

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The pulp after compression is put into a small quantity of the same ley above spoken of, and permitted to remain several hours to extract any remaining dye that might be in it, and undergo the same squeezing process until no dye remains.

The ley is made with care of the ashes after burning, of the green wood of a shrub very similar to the *Auralia Spinosa*, if it be not the same of a stunted growth. So careful are they of procuring this ash unadulterated, that they have dry parcels of it laid by with which to ignite the green wood, that the ashes may not be commingled with those of other woods. The ley is usually made in a large gourd, well cleaned and dried, with the butt end cut off, and a small hole bored through the point of the neck to drip from. The gourd is three quarters filled with the ashes considerably compressed in it, and by a bale or handle suspended from a bar containing several of them. Each is then filled with

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
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rain or pure river water: the point is stopped, and the water allowed to remain on the ashes for a day and night, and then permitted to drip into the vessel placed to catch the ley.

This ley is a little colored, and is clarified by the same process of filtration through clean white sand, or sand that has been used for the same purpose before — when clarified, the ley is used as before stated, and especially to set the colors, which seems to be the principal use of it. It has no caustic quality after filtration, but an astringency peculiar to itself — rather a pungent than burning quality. It is sometimes used to dilute the darker dyes and produce lighter shades.

The wool to be dyed is washed in warm water until perfectly cleansed of the natural oil — using the root of a plant very abundant in Texas and southern New Mexico, as well as most of the southern states, of a very saponaceous quality, and known as the soap plant. In all their best fabrics — blankets, belts, leggings, etc., made of wool, their finest fleeces are used, and it is not unknown to many of our army officers and others, that the Navajoes give great attention to their management of sheep, and often produce fleeces almost or quite equal to the merino in fineness and softness of texture, by their skilful crosses and selections made after long and minute observations and care. A Camanche and Navajoe are as much delighted with the possession of a superior ram and ewe as of a fine horse, to the breeding of which they also give much attention. Von Thaer would not be more so with the possession of his finest buck. All their wool is dyed before spinning, and this is done by submerging it in the dye and letting it remain ten or fifteen days, the dye-pot being left covered: but during this soaking the wool is turned over once every day. Sometimes the lighter shades are imparted to the wool by soaking a shorter time — they say this produces a clearer tint. If not dark enough, the same process is repeated with fresh dye. I have been told by my guide, that the Camanches fumigate the wool after dying, over a smoke of the above described wood, to deepen the color, but I never saw it done.

Their green color is produced from the leaves of several plants, the juice of which is expressed in the same manner as from the flowers, and used in the same manner.

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

Their brown color is made from the inner bark, roots and nuts of the walnut and of other trees, much in the same manner as our farmer's wives now dye their wool for home-made jeans.

After the dyeing is finished, the wool is dried in the shade, and when well dried, exposed to the sun for a few hours; the dyeing is then complete, and the wool ready for spinning, except sometimes, perhaps, not always, they oil the wool slightly, and diffuse the dampness through it by rubbing and rolling it in the hands. I do not know the precise object of this, but they say it works better. This does not impair the color, for washing restores them to their first brightness. It seems to be the peculiar quality of the *set* that gives the lasting brilliancy of the color. I have seen the Camanche blankets, after being used for months, and abused by being put under the saddle, saturated with sweat, rained upon, slept in upon the naked earth, and when carefully washed, present the colors again, as bright as newly dyed silk.

The spinning is what you would call twisting the thread; this is done altogether by the fingers, and somewhat similar to the ancient distaff, though reversing the order of operation. The distaff was used to wrap the raw material upon, and the spool or quill was used not only to wind the thread upon, but as the spindle to twist it. The Camanches reverse this order, and use the raw material for the spindle, and the spool only to wind the thread upon. They use no distaff.

A CAMANCHE SPINNING.

In spinning, a small portion of wool only is used at a time — a mess, say, of a quarter pound weight, and shaped like an egg, say four or five inches long, and two or three in diameter, is wrapped around with a string sufficiently tight to keep it together, but loose enough at the point to permit the wool to be drawn out for spinning the thread — a small stone, of an ounce or so in weight, is tied on the middle of a stick of about six inches in length